

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 AID-05 IO-13 DHA-02 /085 W
-----111847Z 123847 /11

R 110931Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7037
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANILA 3662

E O 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, RP, LY, XF
SUBJ: MRS MARCOS DEPARTS FOR TRIPOLI; PLEBISCITE STILL ON.

REF: A) MANILA 3335, B) MANILA 3492

1. SUMMARY. MRS MARCOS, ACCOMPANIED BY HIGH-LEVEL
GOP DELEGATION, DEPARTED MARCH 10 FOR TRIPOLI, WHERE
SHE WILL ATTEMPT TO BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO NEGOTIATIONS
WITH MUSLIM REBELS. HOWEVER GOP IS GENERALLY
PESSIMISTIC ABOUT ACHIEVING REAL SETTLEMENT. PLEBISCITE
ON MUSLIM AUTONOMOUS REGION STILL SET FOR MARCH 17,
THOUGH FURTHER POSTPONEMENT CANNOT BE RULED OUT. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENT MARCOS ANNOUNCED DURING LIVE TV INTERVIEW
WITH NEWSPAPER EDITORS EVENING OF MARCH 10 THAT MRS. MARCOS
HAD DEPARTED FOR LIBYA EARLIER IN THE DAY. HE SAID MRS. MARCOS
WOULD CLEAR THE WAY FOR THE RESUMPTION OF THE MINDANAO
PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, EXTEND INVITATION TO LIBYAN
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PRESIDENT QADHAFI TO VISIT PHILIPPINES, AND ATTEND
INDUSTRIAL FAIR IN TRIPOLI. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS,
MRS. MARCOS' ENTOURAGE INCLUDES DEFENSE SECRETARY
JUAN PONCE ENRILE, POLICE CONSTABULARY COMMANDER FIDEL
RAMOS, PRESIDENTIAL SECURITY COMMAND CHIEF FABIAN VER,
REAR ADMIRAL ROMULO ESPALDON, SOLICITOR GENERAL
ESTELITO MENDOZA, TOURISM SECRETARY JOSE ASPIRAS,

SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM CHAIRMAN ADRIAN CRISTOBAL, AND NATIONAL MEDIA PRODUCTION CENTER DIRECTOR, GREG GENDANA. MRS. MARCOS' BROTHER, BENJAMIN ROMUALDEZ, REPORTEDLY IS ALREADY IN TRIPOLI ALONG WITH TRADE SECRETARY QUIAZON AND RODOLFO TUPAS, WHO WAS SWORN IN AS AMBASSADOR TO LIBYA MARCH 8. DFA SOURCE INFORMS US THAT DFA UNDERSECRETARY INGLES AND ARAB SPECIALIST, AMB. PACIFICO CASTRO, ARE ALSO WITH PARTY.

3. MRS. MARCOS' DEPARTURE CAME LESS THAN A DAY AFTER THE RETURN TO MANILA OF THE CHIEF PHILIPPINE NEGOTIATOR, DEFENSE UNDERSECRETARY CARMELO BARBERO. BARBERO TOLD A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MARCH 9 THAT ONLY DIPLOMACY "OF THE HIGHEST LEVEL" COULD GET THE RECESSED PEACE TALKS BACK ON TRACK.

4. DURING LENGTHY TV INTERVIEW MARCH 10, MARCOS ALSO DISCUSSED THE STATUS OF THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. HE EXPRESSED OPTIMISM ABOUT AN EVENTUAL SOLUTION TO MINDANAO PROBLEM, BUT STRESSED THAT INITIATIVE NOW RESTS WITH QADHAFI. MARCOS LABELED THE MUSLIM CONFLICT AN "EXPORTED WAR" IN WHICH QADHAFI CALLS THE SHOTS AND ADDED THAT THE MNLF WOULD NEVER HAVE GOTTEN THIS FAR WITHOUT HIS HELP. AT THE SAME TIME, HE EXPRESSED TRUST IN QADHAFI, WHO HE SAID HAD SENT TWO RECENT TELEGRAMS ASSURING MARCOS OF HIS "INTERVENTION WITH THE MNLF", MARCOS SAID HE HOPED TO CONVINCE QADHAFI THAT WHATEVER HAPPENS, THE HOSTILITIES SHOULD NOT BE RESUMED, SINCE IT IS IN THE INTEREST OF THE MUSLIMS TO

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STOP THE FIGHTING. HE WARNED THAT THE ALTERNATIVE TO A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IS "A MESSY TYPE OF WAR WHERE CIVILIANS WILL BE THE PRINCIPAL CASUALTIES."

5. MARCOS ALSO TOOK THE OCCASION TO WARN THE MNLF AGAINST CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS. HE SAID THAT WHILE HE BELIEVED THE MNLF LEADERSHIP TO BE SINCERE, SOME ELEMENTS MAY HAVE DECLARED THEMSELVES FREE OF THE MNLF LEADERSHIP AND ARE VIOLATING THE CEASE FIRE. HE NOTED THAT THE MNLF IS STILL A SUBVERSIVE ORGANIZATION AND SAID THOSE AIDING IT WOULD BE LIABLE TO ARREST ON CHARGES OF SUBVERSION. HE CAUTIONED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL NO LONGER DEPEND ON MNLF PROMISES, BUT WILL PUNISH ANY VIOLATORS. "IF THE MNLF WILL NOT STOP THEM", HE CONCLUDED, "THE AFP WILL."

6. ASKED IF THE MARCH 17 PLEBISCITE WOULD BE POSTPONED,

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MARCOS REPLIED HE WOULD FOLLOW WHATEVER THE COMMISSION
ON ELECTIONS (COMELEC) RECOMMENDS. WITHIN A HALF-HOUR
AFTER MARCOS' INTERVIEW WENT OFF THE AIR, THE MEDIA REPORTED
COMELEC HAD DENIED PETITIONS FILED BY THE MAGUINDANAO
PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION AND INTEGRATED BAR CHAPTERS OF
PAGADIAN AND ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR REQUESTING THAT PLEBISCITE
BE POSTPONED FOR ONE MONTH BECAUSE OF LACK OF TIME TO

DISSEMINATE INFORMATION AND CONFUSION RESULTING FROM MNLF
PROPAGANDA. (NOTE: THE DOOR WOULD STILL APPEAR TO BE
OPEN FOR POSTPONEMENT, HOWEVER. MARCOS ALSO NOTED
IN HIS INTERVIEW THAT HE WOULD SEEK INFORMATION FROM THE
COUNTRYSIDE TO SEE IF GROUNDS FOR POSTPONEMENT ARE VALID.)

7. THE ANTI-MNLF MEDIA CAMPAIGN HAS CONTINUED UNABATED
OVER LAST FEW DAYS, WITH THE MNLF ACCUSED OF INTRANSIGENCE
AND OF CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS. LEADING COMUNIST VALENCIA
OPINED MARCH 11 THAT BARBERO HAD GIVEN UP AFTER 30 DAYS OF
"BITTER EXPERIENCE" NEGOTIATING WITH THE MNLF. VALENCIA
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CALLED THE MNLF TERMS "THOSE OF A VICTORIOUS ARMY." HE

SAID MARCOS STILL GOT TO EXHAUST ALL MEANS TO REACH A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT, BUT THE MNLF HAS MISREAD HIS SIGNALS, THINKING HIS "FATHERLY PATIENCE" MEANT SURRENDER. DAILY EXPRESS REPORTED MARCH 11 THAT SEVERAL BOATLOADS OF HEAVILY ARMED MEN ATTEMPTED TO LAND AT A COASTAL VILLAGE NEAR ZAMBOANGA CITY. MILITARY SOURCES WERE QUOTED IN THE PRESS AS SAYING THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL ARMED ENCOUNTERS WITH MNLF UNITS SINCE NEGOTIATIONS RECESSED MARCH 3 AND THAT THE MNLF IS CONDUCTING A HIGH PRESSURE RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN IN BASILAN. PNA REPORTED MNLF AMBUSCADES, COLLECTION OF "TAXES" AND CIRCULATION OF UNAUTHORIZED PROPAGANDA MATERIAL.

8. PRESS ALSO HAS POSED VEILED THREAT THAT EVEN REGIONS 9 AND 12 MAY NOT VOTE IN PLEBISCITE IN FAVOR OF JOINING MISLIM AUTONOMOUS REGION. BULLETIN TODAY REPORTED MARCH 10 THAT "AFTER MARCOS LIFTED THE EFFECTS OF MARTIAL LAW AND PEOPLE BEGAN TO TALK FREELY," MANY OF THOSE COMMITTED TO VOTE "YES" TO MERGER HAVE NOW DECIDED TO VOTE "NO", MUSLIM LEADERS FROM LANA O WERE QUOTED AS REBUTTING THE MNLF CLAIM TO COMMAND THE LOYALTY OF MOST MUSLIMS AND SAYING THEY WOULD VOTE "NO". BULLETIN ALSO NOTED THAT CONFUSION REIGNS IN SOME AREAS WHERE LOCAL OFFICIALS WHO HAVE ADVOCATED A "YES" VOTE CHANGED THEIR MINDS AND ARE NOW CAMPAIGNING FOR "NO" VOTE.

9. COMMENT: THE HIGH-LEVEL COMPOSITION OF DELEGATION ACCOMPANYING MRS. MARCOS TO TRIPOLI WOULD INDICATE THAT PRESIDENT MARCOS IS MAKING A MOST SERIOUS EFFORT TO BREAK THE IMPASSE IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. HOWEVER, THERE SEEMS TO BE LITTLE REAL OPTIMISM ON THE PART OF GOP OFFICIALS THAT THE EFFORT WILL BE SUCCESSFUL. SECRETARY OF PUBLIC INFORMATION TATAD TOLD ISRAELI EMBOFF AFTER MARCH 10 SESSION THAT EVERYONE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT ANY REAL SETTLEMENT AND NOW INTERESTED PRIMARILY IN PUTTING BEST POSSIBLE

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FACE ON OUTCOME OF TRIPOLI MEETING, LAYING BLAME AT DOOR

OF MNLF IN EVENT OF FAILURE. WE BELIEVE FURTHER POSTPONEMENT OF PLEBISCITE IS STILL A POSSIBILITY IF MARCOS JUDGES THIS MIGHT BRING CONCESSIONS FROM THE OTHER SIDE. ALTHOUGH MARCOS EARLIER URGED VOTERS IN REGIONS 9 AND 12 TO VOTE TO JOIN PROPOSED MUSLIM AUTONOMOUS REGION, HE NOW APPEARS TO BE SUGGESTING THAT PLEBISCITE RESULTS COULD INDICATE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY IN THE SOUTH WANT NOTHING TO DO WITH MUSLIM AUTONOMY AS LEVER TO FORCE MNLF TO BACK DOWN FROM SOME OF ITS MORE EXTREME DEMANDS. SULLIVAN

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Message Attributes

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